THE TOWN.

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Parve . . . . . sine me, liber, ibis in URBEM:
(Hei mihi!) quo domino non licet ire tuo.
Vade.—— OVID.

CITY ASSEMBLY.

THE City Assembly was on Wednesday evening last unusually numerous and brilliant, there having been upward of one hundred and twenty ladies present, and, as was judged, twice that number of gentlemen. We are sorry, however, to have heard, from various quarters, that there was a very great share of dissatisfaction expressed by the ladies, for want of the attention usual on such occasions. The following letter, on this subject, is just received, and we shall let our correspondent speak for himself.

Saturday Evening.

MR. EDITOR,

A stranger to THE TOWN intreats permission to make your fashionable paper the vehicle of some complaints which he cannot refrain from uttering, at the treatment experienced on Wednesday evening last, in your City Assembly.

I had not long entered the room, before I perceived that no little confusion had already ensued, from the want of a sufficient number of managers; it being, here, as I am told, a rule, that only one, of four persons chosen for that purpose, should officiate each evening. The gentleman, who, on Wednesday evening, was the acting-manager, was perhaps entitled to every praise for his exertions, but, the objection is, that it was not possible for him, or any other individual, to maintain the order, and provide for the accommodation, of so large a company. If the other managers did not tender their services on so extraordinary an occasion, why were there not appointed assisting-managers, *pro tempore?* That I am not disposed to criticise without a cause, will appear from the brief narrative which I presume to add.

Having surveyed the ladies round and round, at length I cast my eyes upon a young lady, who struck me as uncommonly attractive, and, who, as I presently discovered, was a stranger, like myself; and, having begged my friend, Mr. ———, to procure me an introduction, I requested the honour of being her partner, in the first country-dance. She gracefully bowed her head, and I asked her for a sight of her number. It was No. 13th, of the 4th set. When it was called, I flew to hand her to the spot; but, before we reached it, Nos. 14 and 15 had already occupied the place. Of course, we took that allotted to No. 16. We had not, however, stood many minutes, waiting for the sets to be completed, and the music to begin, when I perceived a light and elegant figure glide up behind my partner, and place herself, with a little tittering, directly above her. I was about to inquire into how this should with propriety happen, when I perceived a second gliding figure take a station above the first, and after that a third!—and a fourth!—after this, I could hold no longer, but, in the language of Macbeth, at the apparitions, involantarily exclaimed,

A fourth? start eyes!
What! Will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?
Another yet!—A seventh!—I'll see no more:—
And yet the eight appears [and yonder] glass
Shows me [too] many more.

By the time I had recovered from my reverie, during which my partner, it seems, had been in so much amazement as not to notice what was passing, we found ourselves, by the above sort of cheat-in-play, removed from the situation of number 13, to that of 26.

But, our vexation did not end here. After waiting for our turn, till we were almost weary with standing—just as the first couple had come near enough to produce that degree of exhilaration which a young fellow, of any spirit, and somewhat of a proficient in dancing, alway feels, and may be allowed to feel, at the prospect of showing himself to advantage in the eyes of a fine woman, and which a fine woman sometimes feels in turn—up comes the manager, and orders us to sit down, for that they were too many in the set! O ye gods and little fishes! what mortification, vexation, and tribulation did I not experience? But, it was in vain to remonstrate; the orders were peremptory; and, if not, the manager was out of sight in a flash, and out of reach.

You will hardly credit me, sir; but I do assure you that all this actually happened, to my partner and myself, no less than three different times, in the course of the evening. You may be ready to suppose, that the mortification experienced by the lady, my partner, would have deterred her from a second, or at any rate from a third, attempt; but, being a spirited as well as a sensible and beautiful girl, she said, she was determined not to give way to trifles, and therefore, three several times she gave me her hand, and was led to her place, and every time was equally unsuccessful. As I led her to her seat the third time, she said,

with a smile as irresistibly lovely as sarcastic, that the determined and gallant conduct of the manager reminded her of Dryden's hero—

> *Thrice* he conquered all his foes
> And *thrice* he *slew the slain!*

Finding it useless to persevere any further, she threw away her number, and told me, she had now reconciled herself to sitting still,during the remainder of the evening, content

> To look and sigh, and sigh and look again.

But,at this moment, the country dances were suspended, & cotillons proposed. I flew, with the swiftness of an arrow, to my partner, and told her, that now an opportunity offered to obtain something like an indemnity for what had past, begging her to join in the first set of cotillons. So said, so done. But, alas! how transitory were our congratulations! Hardly was the set completed, when, just as the music was about to strike up, information was brought us, that the country-dances must begin again, and cotillons give way. This fourth disappointment broke down all our hopes.

Though my feet were kept motionless, as I did not suppose that my eyes were to be so too, I amused myself with looking at those happy mortals, whose stars, or something else, had stood their friend. Sir, the ladies of your city, though it might be going too far to assert that they could not dance better, dance well enough; but as to the gentlemen, I saw few of them who appeared entitled to boast of having received lessons from DUPORT.

To finish the evening, and invigorate us, after the excessive fatigue of *so much* dancing, we were invited to partake of an elegant supper, with rich wines, confectionary, &c. I doubt not it was all very excellent; but I was too late by seven seconds, and therefore was entirely *thrown out*. So, as I could neither eat nor dance, I thought I might as well go home.—In departing, however, I had to encounter an additional cause of regret, in learning that the fair stranger, my lovely partner had lost her supper too.

ROGER DE COVERLEY.

THE THEATRE.

WE were misinformed, as to the particular kind of ill usage experienced by Mr. Chambers, on the evening of his first song. We learn that *Black-eyed Susan* was not forced upon him, but that he had reason to complain of the point of time at which he was sent upon the stage. This was, half way, between the play and the farce, when the house, it is well known, is nearly empty. On the second occasion, he sung immediately before the drawing up of the curtain, for the farce. For our own part, governed by what is usual, we had expected to see the orchestra enter directly after the conclusion of the play, and thus announce the approach of the singer. On the gentleman alluded to, no kind of imputation rests.

Monday Evening, January 5.

MACBETH was again attended by a respectable house, and again offered us great satisfaction.

For Mr. Cooper's *Macbeth* we have the very highest respect, and we believe ourselves entitled to congratulate the audience of New-York, upon the possession of an actor, whom, in many points of view, we prefer to any whom we have ever seen in this laborious character. In that, however, which, upon the whole, is excellent, there will always be particular defects, obvious to all but those who are wanting in attentions, or who are blinded by admiration. These particular defects it is the business of critics to mark.

We are well aware, that if the same actor perform the same part fifty different times, he will, exhibit different beauties and defects in fifty different passages. To-night he will fall short where yesternight he shone; and to-morrow offend where he has always hitherto shone. He cannot always enter with equal spirit into his part, nor into its minuter features. He will sometimes make new experiments, and these experiments will sometimes fail.

It follows, that, when we speak of any single performance of any given character, much that we say may be inapplicable to a view of that character founded on its multiplied performances. In other words, what is true, of Mr. Cooper's *Macbeth* of this evening, may be false, as to what, in general terms, we call, Mr. Cooper's *Macbeth.*

If we could always distinguish between occasional lapses and habitual errors, between accidental faults and fancied merits, we should rarely notice the former. We despise to the uttermost that carping criticism which lies in wait for occasions of censure, and seizes upon every obvious and undefended mistake. Small talents are indeed to be decried, in every art—in every undertaking—and, in so doing, and in so suffering, it is our consolation to reflect, that talents make only a part of the human composition; and that those, who have them not, or have them but in humble measure, may yet be very estimable—but, small talents apart, what calls for the lash, are luckless conceits and arrogant pretensions.

But, to suffer ourselves no longer to be diverted from our immediate business, let us come to the *Macbeth* of the evening, magnificent as it assuredly was, and even without considerable blemishes; but taste must aim at, if it can never reach perfection.

We begin with his first scene, which is the third scene of the play. By the emphasis on *prophetic*—with such *prophetic* greeting,—Mr. Cooper conveys the idea, that *Macbeth* has an intimate conviction of the infallibility of the witches. There is a way in giving it, in which it would imply—*words which assume to be prophetic.*

The speech beginning,

> Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme,

was one of the few which we thought delivered in no masterly manner. The words *swelling* and *imperial* certainly excite appropriate ideas in the mind, and should therefore be expressed with a degree of kindred emotion; but, whether an utterance, lengthened without end, is the thing desirable, we submit to Mr. Cooper and his audience.—We cannot perceive that these adjectives, and especially the first, are *essential to the thought*, and, upon this ground, we seriously protest against Mr. Cooper's practice.

> And make my heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature.—

Mr. Cooper made a pause, which improperly divided

the two members of this sentence.—*And make my heart knock at my ribs——against the use of nature.*

——that function
Is smother'd in surmise,

did not, in his mouth, or in our ear, import, as it ought, *that what is real is lost in conjecture.*

The soliloquy, *If, when 'twere done*, was nearly as chaste as we could wish. There was still, however, too much suavity in—*Besides this Duncan.* Mr. Cooper's expression would be correct, were he endeavouring to convince others of this truth; but, as he has no need to attempt the awakening of his own sympathies, it goes too far. The image of Pity is, as we find, purposely omitted. This is to be condemned. The imagery and diction is fine, and this is not all—the thought is of importance. In the preceding sentence, *Macbeth* anticipates the wrath of heaven—in this, the execration of mankind, consequent on their grief for Duncan—arguments, as we may say—'strong *both* against the deed.'

We remark that Mr. Cooper reads,

I'd jump the life to come;

but the proposition which follows is clearly general—*We still have judgment here*, &c.—We prefer, therefore, the common reading, *We'd jump*, &c.

The *dagger-scene* we have already included among the foremost objects of praise. The listening at the door of *Duncan*'s chamber, like many other beauties in this part of the performance, must strike every observer; but, is it not inconsistent with this cautious listening, that *Macbeth* should afterward stamp upon the floor, and make other noises? Stillness and a whispering voice are not only characteristic here, but productive of much effect, as may be sufficiently collected from a passage in this speech, which, like the former, we regret to see omitted by Mr. Cooper:

——Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
The very stones prate of my where-about,
And *take the present horror from the time.*

Mr. Cooper makes another unfortunate pause, between the lines which follow:

Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with;

and he takes such liberties, with the word *glare*, as we can neither describe nor forgive.—Another pause—

Take any shape but that;

this, according to Mr. Cooper, is,

Take any shape——but that;

as if *Macbeth* corrected himself, and qualified his general challenge, with—*but that*. But, this is no second thought, as, with Mr. Cooper, it appears. From the time when he begins the sentence, he has this in view. We recommend,

For *them* the gracious Duncan have I murder'd,

instead of,

For them the gracious Duncan have I *murder'd*,

and—

To make *them* kings, the *seed of Banquo* kings,

instead of,

To make them *kings*, the seed of Banquo *kings*,

Mr. Cooper should correct his word—*mut*terial.

We shall pursue no further, on the present occasion, Mr. Cooper's performance, flattering ourselves with the hope of many opportunities of witnessing its repetition. His concluding scenes are admirably supported.

Mrs. Villiers's worst scene is that in which *Lady Macbeth* walks in her sleep. We disapprove of her setting the candle out of her hand. It is enough that we believe her to walk and talk in her sleep; the setting down the candle, though physically possible, is, in the mind's eye, an additional miracle, gratuously imposed upon us, and such as weakens our belief. She does not employ the action of washing hands.—Several of her speeches, in other scenes, are well delivered; she does not want understanding, and is a good actress—as far as she can go.

In reading the letter, we thought that we saw improvement—at least, we saw less that displeased us, than before. All that we want is, a natural delivery, but not therefore what is tame. Every emotion of surprise is proper; and thus, yesterday evening, we were thoroughly satisfied, till her arrival at the old stumbling-block—*Hail, King that shall be.*'

Now, we do contend, that these words may be uttered in many different ways, and yet always with emotion. It is not then the emotion that we blame, but the species of emotion. As uttered by the witches, they express veneration; as read by *Lady Macbeth*, a mere matter of fact—and, in the particular situation of *Lady Macbeth* especially, surprise—amazement—is the only true emotion. She is not speaking to a superior, to conciliate his favour, or to indulge her own feelings of respect. We would have her say——

Hail——*king*—that shalt be!!!

Again, in what follows, and which is merely complimentary, Mrs. Villiers reads slowly, and *con expressione*, like a boarding-school girl, who, having received a love-letter, is willing to gratify her ear as well as her eyes. We contend, that the expression proper to these words, if addressed to her by the mouth of *Macbeth*, is not that with which she should read them. First, because it is wrong in a general view; and, secondly, because, after what she has previously read, she must be necessarily impatient of what, under these circumstances, is trivial. If Mrs. Villiers were to receive a private letter, in the first part of which she found matter of great moment, she would, at a first reading, hurry through every thing—and every thing too that did not relate to it, in the hope of finding something further, on the topic of prime interest.

Mr. Allen, as First of the Murderers, fixed a large share of our attention—But, here, in justice to ourselves, to Mr. Allen, to the 'great king,' *Macbeth*, to a numerous and elegant audience, to the public at large, and to the real individual himself, we solemly declare (and we expect to be believed, upon our word!) that it was not us who laughed, in the left corner of the pit!—No; that was a critic who made mouths; for our part—we make paragraphs. It is true that we are given to laughing—but then it is in our sleeve; and, as to this Democritus-Junior, with his hearty broad faced ha, HAH, HAH!—he must have been one that had nothing to do but to laugh—not an apple to munch, not a nymph to ogle—nor, as Master Sterne has it—a stop-watch to look at. For us, considering how practised we must be, in stifling a laugh, nobody will suspect us of being betrayed beyond a te, he, he!—But, we enter into none of these details with the design of eluding suspicion. We expect to be believed upon our word.

Of Mr.Rutherford, who, in consequence of Mr.Morse's indisposition, undertook the part of *Macduff*, we have but little to say. Mr. Rutherford performs with chasteness, but wants polish and high powers. He had muchvigour in the exclamation,

> But, gentle heav'n,
> Cut short all intermission ; front to front
> Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself ;
> Within my sword's length set him ; if he scape,
> Heaven forgive him too !

But, when *Malcom* recommends it to him, *to dispute it like a man*, what is the meaning of so boisterous an *I shall do so ?*—The figure of, *my pretty chickens*, would be better relished, if the word 'hell-*kite*' were previously pronounced with distinctness.

Mr. Rutherford is apt to slur his words over, as, *funtasticle*.

In the *Agreeable Surprize*, Mrs. Darley, Mrs. Wheatly and Miss Dellinger were pleasing. Though we nauseated much of the outrageous nonsense, concerning the '*Princess Rusty-Fusty*,' we relished *Lingo* and the songs. N. B. One of the gentlemen—he will excuse our forgetting his name—he often forgets his part—was in remarkable good *memory*.

This evening, *January* 7, Goldsmith's comedy of *She Stoops to Conquer*, or, *The Mistakes of a Night*, and *Don Juan*.

Mr. Cooper having generously resolved to give benefits to Mr. Hallam, senior, and to the orphan children of the late Mrs. Jones, has fixed on *Wednesday*, *the 14th instant*, for the benefit of Mr. HALLAM, and Friday, the 16th, for that of the CHILDREN OF MRS. JONES.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER.

IN the following extract, from Mr. Cumberland's Memoirs of his own life, is an interesting account of the launching of *She Stoops to Conquer*. Dr. Goldsmith, in his dedication, to Dr. Johnson, bears testimony to its leading features. 'I have particular reason,' says he, 'to thank you for your partiality to this performance. The undertaking a comedy, not merely sentimental, was very dangerous ; and Mr. Colman, who saw this piece in its various stages, always thought it so.'

Oliver Goldsmith began at this time to write for the stage, and it is to be lamented that he had not begun at an earlier period of life to turn his genius to dramatic composition, and much more to be lamented, that after he had begun, the succeeding period of his life was so soon cut off. There is no doubt but his genius, when more familiarized to the business, would have inspired him to accomplish grest things. His first comedy of The Good Natured Man was read and applauded in its manuscript by Edmund Burke, and the circle in which he then lived and moved: under such patronage it came with those testimonials to the director of Covent Garden Theatre, who could not fail to open all the avenues to the stage, and bespeak all the favour and attention from the performers and the public, that the applauding voice of him, whose applause was fame itself, could give it. This comedy has enough to justify the good opinion of its literary patron, and secure its author against any loss of reputation, for it has the stamp of a man of talents upon it, though its popularity with the audience did not quite keep pace with the expectations, grounded on the fiat it had antecedently been honoured with. It was a first effort, however, and did not discourage its ingenious author from invoking his muse a second time. It was now, while his labours were in projection, that I first met him at the British Coffee-house, as I have already related somewhat out of place. He dined with us as a visitor, introduced, as I think, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and we held a consultation upon the naming of his comedy, which some of the company had read, and which he detailed to the rest with a great deal of good humour. Somebody suggested—She Stoops to Conquer, and that title was agreed upon. When I perceived an embarrassment in his manner towards me, which I could readily account for, I lost no time to put him at his ease, and I flatter myself I was successful. As my heart was ever warm towards my contemporaries, I did not counterfeit, but really felt a cordial interest in his behalf, and I had soon the pleasure to perceive that he credited me for my sincerity.—'You and I,' said he, 'have very different motives for resorting to the stage. I write for money, and care little about fame—.' I was touched by this melancholy confession, and from that moment busied myself assiduously among all my connexions in his cause. The whole company pledged themselves to the support of the ingenious poet, and faithfully kept their promise to him. In fact he needed all that could be done for him, as Mr. Colman, then manager of Covent Garden Theatre, protested against the comedy, when as yet he had not struck upon a name for it. Johnson at length stood forth, in all his terrors, as champion for the piece, and backed by us, his clients and retainers, demanded a fair trial. Colman again protested, but, with that salvo for his own reputation, liberally lent his stage to one of the most eccentric productions that ever found its way to it, and She Stoops to Conquer was put into rehearsal.

We were not over sanguine of success, but perfectly determined to struggle hard for our author: we accordingly assembled our strength at the Shakspeare tavern in considerable body for an early dinner, where Samuel Johnson took the chair at the head of a long table, and was the life and soul of the corps: the poet took post silently by his side, with the Burkes, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Fitzherbert, Caleb Whiteford, and a phalanx of North British predetermined applauders, under the banner of Major Mills, all good men and true. Our illustrious president was in inimitable glee, and poor Goldsmith that day took all his raillery as patiently and complacently as my friend Boswell would have done any day or every day of his life. In the mean time we did not forget our duty, and though we had a better comedy going, in which Johnson was chief actor, we betook ourselves in good time to separate, and allotted posts, and waited the awful drawing up of the curtain. As our stations were preconcerted, so were our signals for plaudits arranged and determined upon in a manner that gave every one his cue where to look for them, and how to follow them up.

We had amongst us a very worthy and efficient member, long since lost to his friends, and the world at large, Adam Drummond, of amiable memory, who was gifted by nature with the most sonorous, and at the same time the most contagious, laugh, that ever echoed from the human laughs. The neigning of the horse of the son of Hystaspes was a whisper to it ; the whole thunder of the theatre could not drown it. This kind and ingenious friend fairly forewarned us that he knew no more when to give his fire than the cannon did that was planted on the battery. He desired therefore to have a flapper at his elbow, and I had the honour to be deputed to that office. I planted him in an upper box, pretty nearly over the stage, in full view of the pit and galleries, and perfectly well situated to give the echo all its play through the hollows and recesses of the theatre. The success of our manœuvres was complete. All eyes were upon Johnson, who sat in a front row of a side box ; and when he laughed every body thought themselves warranted to roar. In the mean time my friend followed my signals with a rattle so irrestibly comic, that, when he had repeated it several times, the attention of the spectators was so engrossed by his person, and performances, that the progress of the play seemed likely to become a secondary object, and I found it prudent to insinuate to him that he might halt his music without any prejudice to the author ; but, alas, it was now too late to rein him in ; he had laughed upon my signal where he found no joke, and now unluckily he fancied that he found a joke in almost every thing that was said ; so that nothing in nature could be more mal-a-propos than some of his bursts every now and then were. These were dangerous moments, for the pit began to take umbrage ; but we carried our play through, and triumphed not only over Colman's judgment, but our own."

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